
NUMU TEKWAPUHA NOMENEEKATU NEWSLETTER

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The Comanche Language & Cultural Preservation Committee
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Editor: Barbara Goodin

“Letter From The President”

Haa Tui, Haa Haitsi,

I hope you are all well and in good spirits. Our Language group recently attended the 9th Annual Shoshone Reunion in Fort Washakie, Wyoming. It was exciting to see our old friends (we have attended all nine of them!), and there were some of our old friends we missed.

We listened to them talk and tell stories in their language. If you listen, you can hear them talk in Comanche.

We had a wonderful time. One day we took a side trip to Yellowstone National Park. What a sight! And our little group of elders caused quite a stir when they all sat around “Old Faithful” and started to sing Comanche Songs! A large crowd gathered and people started asking where they were from and what tribe they were. The cameras were flashing all over as people from around the world were amazed to see Comanche Indians from Oklahoma singing our beautiful songs in such a beautiful setting created by Taa Ahpu.

At the Reunion I was happy to see many more Comanches attend this year’s event, and hope they all came home wanting to learn the Comanche language. I know everyone says, “My folks use to talk to us in Comanche when we were little children...” Well, guess what? You would be a good candidate to become a fluent speaker with a little help. I don’t want to sound like a preacher, but....

Ura, Billie Kreger

WIKIPEDIA

I’m sure some of you are aware of Wikipedia, the online dictionary. You can find it by typing in “Wikipedia” on your Google search engine. When that page opens you will find Wikipedia with a space you can type in “Comanche language.” That opens several sites that pertain to our language on Wikipedia.

It was interesting to look through some of them after a Comanche reader alerted me to the site. Apparently you can even “edit” some of the information on there. When I have time I will look through more of it and see how much misinformation has gotten onto yet another web site.

If we as Comanches see incorrect information we need to get it corrected. No one else will do it for us.

INDIAN TACOS

The May-June 2008 issue of Oklahoma Today had a story about Indian Tacos, and I want to share part of it with you:

“The Indian Taco is a favorite fair treat for many Oklahomans, but its origin is anything but festive. When Native Americans were sent to reservations in the late 1800s, their rations consisted of flour, sugar, salt, baking powder and powdered milk, the key ingredients of fry bread and the base of the Indian taco.

“The resulting bread is always deep fried, then layered with meat – usually

ground beef, but often buffalo, beefalo, venison, pork or lamb – and topped with beans, lettuce, cheese, sour cream, and green chilis (*what?*). Some cooks add seasonings and taco sauce. Some prefer theirs unadorned.”

For the last six years the Osage Nation has sponsored a National Indian Taco Championship in Pawhuska OK, with generous prizes of \$1,500, \$1,000 and \$500 offered in two categories – Indian Tacos and Dessert Indian Tacos. This year the event was held in May, but go to www.osagetribe.com/tourism for more information.

We have a lot of excellent Comanche fry bread cooks out there, I'd like to see one of you bring that prize to Comanche Country!

NOSTALGIA: INDIAN STYLE

by Joseph Shunkamolah 4-18-2008

(*the following article has been circulating through cyberspace, and although my attempts to reach Mr. Shunkamolah were unsuccessful, I felt like his words are worth repeating. The Subject line read: “Finally, somebody said it...”

“I was wondering the other day why all of a sudden “Oldies” stations have become such big business on the radio and they have a lot of listeners, (and) there are different types of oldies stations also: country and western, jazz, big band, rock, metal and on and on. All I have to do is tune in to an up to date radio station and it is hard to understand what that music is all about. I switch back to the “Oldies” real quick to comfort myself with the thought that there will never be any music like that again, and it was way better than what is out there now. Sometimes when I'm driving, a war dance song will come to me and I will start it out and second myself, and if I am with one of my sons, they will

second me and usually pick up the lead even if I don't want them to. This is a comfort to me as well, as I look back on it, because I know they understand the words of the songs and they will be able to sing them when they have sons of their own, and they can look back and feel the comfort in the songs.

Lately, there have been some big changes in many of our traditional dances, songs, and just Indians in general. Pow-wows have become more of a business than the gatherings that used to bring people together to celebrate an annual event, or the celebration of the songs and the dances that used to make our ancestors feel like they were still a People. Pow-wows were a way for Indians to remember what life used to be like before the herding together of tribes onto reservations by the government, and the forced schooling and anglicizing, before we began to be acculturated into what we have now become. Don't fool yourself, we are acculturated! I look at the internet and I am amazed at the kinds of outfits that both men and women wear at pow-wows now, the way they have made their outfits look like dancers in a Las Vegas show, with all the sequins and rhinestones, not only women, but men, too. Indians have always been adaptable people, but I'm not sure what we are adapting to, especially in our pow-wows and even in ceremonies. The big pow-wow in Albuquerque each spring brings “Indians” from all over and is “the beginning of the pow-wow season” according to the organizers, who by the way, are not Indians themselves, and the “great Native Oklahoma gathering” in Oklahoma City, (neither) of which benefit Indians, but only show them off to anyone with the price of admission. Money has become the Pavlov's dinner bell for many of our Indian people, and

many of them have lost the teachings, if they ever knew them, of our elders. I do not go to many pow-wows anymore because I do not like to see what they have changed in to; the truth is they are not much fun anymore, watching contest after contest (*Editor's note: and give-away after give-away*).

"In many places there is no longer anything called a benefit dance, or an honor dance; if you don't have contests you don't have a pow-wow. Even some of our ceremonial dances have changed in the past few years. I have witnessed some of those changes in our ceremonial dances in the past few years as well. I used to go to them just to get that old feeling again, looking for that good path and renewing the spirit, but we are starting to lose that as well. I remember hearing some of the old men say that when you hear a certain song memories from the old folks come back and it brings tears to your eyes and you get a lump in your throat and you remember those people and that spirit. That's what these dances are about. It's getting down right difficult to hear those old songs at pow-wows, and it's getting hard to hear them at some of our ceremonial dances as well. In some places, what people don't know they tend to make up, and pretty soon those made up things become tradition. Things stop being traditions when you stop doing them and they can not be made up to suit the situation. I miss those times and wish we could have them back. Nostalgia.

"I guess we have to switch back to the "Oldies" when we can, the new stuff doesn't make sense. I wish I could say how to do that, but it is not up to the older people like it used to be. We have so many young people that have, for one reason or another, put themselves into a position of knowing about the old ways and want to dictate what should be

done. This is another argument for assimilation, a word that used to scare us older people to death, but has now become the norm. I recently saw an article written by an Indian anthropologist that listed modern Indian people as being "Traditional," a person that knows and practices tribal ceremonies and speaks the language through five degrees to "Assimilated," a person that shows up at ceremonies with a camera and several white friends. When this was presented, younger people took it badly and disagreed vehemently, even to the point of telling this elder person that he did not know what he was talking about. So much for respecting your elders."

REMEMBERING OUR PAST

On July 27, 1993, a group of Comanches met at 5:30 p.m. in the conference room of the Comanche Tribal Complex. Edward Tahhahwah Jr. served as moderator.

There was discussion on ways to restore the Comanche language and retain tribal culture.

There was a consensus that a name for the group should be adopted and officers should be elected.

Lucille McClung nominated Ronald Red Elk for president by acclamation, seconded by Martin Weryackwe Jr. Mr. Red Elk was elected by a show of hands.

Maria Peavey nominated Martin Weryackwe Jr. as vice-president, seconded by Cid Rivas. There were no other nominations and Mr. Weryackwe was elected.

Ray Niedo nominated Carla Russell as secretary/treasurer, seconded by Barbara Goodin. There were no other nominations and Ms. Russell was elected secretary/treasurer.

Eva Riddles nominated Edward Tahhahwah Jr. as Preservation Officer, seconded by Albert Nahquaddy. There were no other nominations and Mr. Tahhahwah was elected Preservation Officer.

Mr. Red Elk formally called the meeting to order, and asked Ray Nieto to give an invocation.

As this was the first meeting held, there were no previous minutes to be read. Mr. Red Elk directed Ms. Russell to check on opening a bank account for the group in anticipation of future funding. A report will be given concerning this at the next meeting.

There was discussion on developing a constitution for the group. It was decided the officers would draft a constitution and bring it before the whole group for fine tuning before adoption.

There was discussion on a name for the group. It was voted to adopt the name "The Comanche Language and Cultural Preservation Committee."

Dr. Alice Anderton, linguist from the University of Oklahoma, spoke on developing a Comanche alphabet and spelling system. Plans were made for President Red Elk to approach the Comanche Business Committee (CBC) to officially adopt an alphabet and spelling system for the Comanche Tribe. A definite date will be set later.

A short session was held on Comanche words, with Ms. Anderton acting as facilitator.

Mr. Red Elk announced the next meeting will be held August 10, 1993, at 5:30 p.m. in the conference room. The meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by Carla Russell, secretary.

Those signing in at this meeting were:
Ronald Red Elk Ed Tahhahwah Jr.
Bud Yackeschi Carla Russell
Jo Vickers Ozzie Red Elk

Barbara Goodin Maria Peavey
Kenneth Goodin Alice Anderton
Martin Weryackwe Jr.

And:

Roderick "Dick" Red Elk* Belle Pekah*
Leonard Riddles* Eva Riddles*
Lizzie Poemeceah* Cid Rivas*
Albert Nahquaddy* Ray Nieto*
Forrest Kassanavoid* Lucille McClung*
(*all the above are now deceased. We remember each of them fondly.)

UNTIL WE WALK TOGETHER AGAIN

Written by Richard Gonzales for the
Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Feb 13, 2005

PFC Franklin Swimmer-McLemore, citizen of the Cherokee Nation, stood at attention before the Army lieutenant colonel asking him questions at the promotion review.

"Do you speak a second language, PFC?" the officer said.

"Yes, sir. I speak English." McLemore said.

The lieutenant colonel's face turned red and he repeated the question. The answer was the same.

At the officer's order to dismiss, McLemore gave a snappy salute and executed an about face, knowing that he had spoken the truth. He could never deny the language of his parents and elders.

You first language is the soul of your identity, he would tell his students who had come from miles around to recapture the Cherokee words that they had lost along the trail from Oklahoma to the big city.

Approximately 50,000 American Indians live and work in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, according to W. Keith Overstreet, family service director for the Urban Inter-Tribal Center of Texas.

Serving in Vietnam, McLemore was a loyal warrior for his country but most importantly until his death on Feb. 5, he was an activist, educator, visionary, organizer and voice for the American Indian.

Some called him the Dream Catcher.

He never forgot the forced assimilation that he and thousands of other Indian boys and girls endured while attending boarding school. The United States government decided in the late 19th century that Indian children should abandon Indian life and learn “American” ways.

The children were taken from their parents and instructed not to speak Indian languages, nor wear Indian clothes and jewelry, nor dance to Indian songs, nor beat Indian drums nor practice Indian spirituality.

Their instructors, living out their Manifest Destiny dreams, cut the children’s long hair and culture.

After boarding school and his stint in the military, McLemore grew his hair long again and boldly walked and talked Indian ways. He studied the history of the American Indian and taught at area universities.

The government’s attempts to commit cultural genocide on the first Americans continued until the 1960s.

McLemore worked relentlessly to found self-help Indian organizations, such as the Tribal American Network, American Indian Chamber of Commerce, DFW American Indian Employment Council and American Indian Heritage and Business Center.

McLemore lived the Indian value of allegiance to the tribe – unlike the romantic notion of rugged individualism.

One lasting project was the production of a radio program on KNON 89.3 called “Beyond Bows and Arrows,” which is in its 25th year.

McLemore explained that the American Indian program, which airs from 6 to 8 p.m. Sunday, was intended to show that the Indian culture was more than the image of a howling buck on horseback wearing war paint and carrying a tomahawk.

Dennis Wahkinney, a Comanche and current (2005) producer of the program, said that McLemore encouraged him to take over the programming.

Although initially shy, Wahkinney overcame his hesitancy and learned his teacher’s courage to speak boldly about the beauty of Indian culture.

Rafael “Tall Bear” Montez, acting president of the Tribal American Network,

considered McLemore his brother – and the father that he never had.

Raised as a Latino, Montez confirmed suspicions that he was really Indian when he questioned his grandmother. She told him that they were Comanche but it would be easier to find happiness and jobs if he passed for Latino.

He ignored her advice and insisted that she tell him about the Comanches.

Tall Bear teamed with McLemore and traveled to schools and military bases to teach about American Indian history and culture.

“A soldier once asked me if we still live in teepees,” he said with a laugh. “A lot of Hispanics are Comanches and Apaches but they don’t realize it. When they look into it, they realize that they’re brown people and this is their land and should be proud of it.”

Danny Dixon, a blue-eyed, blond haired member of Eastern Georgia Cherokee Tribe, spoke proudly about the many drops of Indian blood that course through his body.

McLemore accepted him as an Indian brother and called him affectionately in Cherokee “the man with no color.”

He said that McLemore taught him the importance of questioning your elders about your identity and roots. If not, then your children will forget their language and customs.

Despite his parents’ attempt to hide his indigenous blood, Dixon, like “Tall Bear,” discovered the Indian truth.

And like McLemore, he learned never to say goodbye at death but instead “*donadagohvi*” – we’ll see you again. (*Ura (thank you) to our Texas friend, John Yates, for sharing that newspaper article with us.*)

DORIS DUKE COLLECTION
SARAH POHOCSUCUT INTERVIEW
March 21, 1967

My name is Sarah Pohocsucut and I live in Lawton. I am 73 years old. When I was a little girl, about 7 years old, Lawton came to be a little tent town.

Just about a mile from where I live, I have many playmates that we use to play in the meadow, where Lawton is.

One day we woke up and was to rush away to a playground. We saw a big tent. We thought some people had come to camp there, and (would) be going on. So my playmates told me that we wait 'till they gone – go 'way. So we waited then after while they started to build frame buildings. My playmates say, "They start building something. What you think they're doing." "Well," I says, "I don't know."

Well, after 'while someone went to see what was going on. They come back and say, "They have a lot of thing to sell, everything is pretty over there." No tents, in frame buildings. So we go look around and see what was going on. First time I ever see a lot of white people. And then as we go on they start building a lot more houses. I could remember a street named Goo Goo Avenue. They made lots of streets, and we said, "All right we have seen what they've done."

We've been going to school at a boarding school, named Fort Sill Indian School. After a while we grow up to be young ladies. And still the people were there. We haven't seen them go away, but they have built a big city today (1967).

I have seen a great many things happen there, that I could not describe, but it's a wonderful thing that this great big city is here. As we have said, we went to get away from there – we go play there. But still today, I'm still waiting. So I think that today, that I ain't waiting anymore.

I have found a big city, and I live in the city myself. My children growed up there, and mingled with white children. And I think that's a fine thing, to give them a chance to be like them. As for me, I am getting old, and I will (be)

passing on, and I have given my children their chance. They have gone to school, finished their high schools, going to college, going to armed services, and all that.

Today Lawton is one of the big cities, spreading, still spreading – west, south, east and (it) hit Fort Sill and stop there.

Way back my Indians didn't want (to) go to reservations, all of them fought. Many of them run away. But I happen to be a member of a clan that came to the Medicine Lodge Treaty. The old chief's name was Ten Bears. He was old, but he said, "I don't like what you white men (are) doing to me. I don't like it a bit." He says, "My children are going to grow up, and (I) want them to have a chance, so I will go down and sit down."

Another chief was there named Kickingbird, a Kiowa Chief, (and he) said the same thing. And they both came down from Medicine Lodge towards Fort Sill and settle down.

They came through a gap going towards Fort Sill, today this gap is a great road. Going from Lawton to Carnegie. Well, when they sat down there, the government wants Ten Bears. They find him at the gap. And the gap was known as Yaparuka Gap.

So today we are here. The Indians don't like reservation(s). Way back we done away with our reservation and tried to live like a white man. But still we are struggling.

Ten Bears made a speech at Medicine Lodge, which was recorded as a masterpiece. And I am proud of it, because I am part of his clan.

Tonokone run away, Penetukas were brought from Texas. Wahatahs run away, so they had to be gotten by the army. But I'm glad I was one of the peaceful ones.

Our land has come to be filled with (a) lot of white people. Many, many years ago we run the whole country.

Many years ago the rivers were pretty, beautiful running water. That's the way God created it, pure water. But today we got big lakes, today we go gas. Today we got water (and) lights when you turn it on. What a wonderful way to live.

My people, many times don't understand. But I think if we just get ourselves together we could go and live happily. Everything is always just split. My people split, the Kiowa people were split. Everybody has two ways.

Of course, I understand the white people have Republicans, Democrats and so forth. I don't know what Bob Miller (*the man doing the interview*) is, (but) I'm a Democrat.

I am Sarah Pohocsucut, from Lawton, Oklahoma, and a Comanche Indian.

COMANCHE LANGUAGE DVDS

In the April 2008 issue of this newsletter, we published a list of DVDs that we have accumulated over the years, and told you that you could request up to three (3) copies of any of the DVDs. We filled quite a few requests, and would like to remind you that you can again order another three copies if you like. The full list appears in the April 2008 issue, but you can also see it on our web site at www.comanchelanguage.org after you scroll to Language Newsletter.

PRODUCTS FOR SALE

Comanche Dictionary. Compiled entirely by Comanche people, this dictionary contains over 6,000 Comanche words with Comanche to English and English to Comanche sections. \$30 plus \$5 s&h.

Comanche Lessons, set #1. A set of four Comanche Lessons, complete with

a word list for each lesson and a CD. \$20 plus \$5 s&h.

Picture Dictionary. 26 page Primer explains the Comanche alphabet and sound of each letter. Includes a CD. \$12 plus \$3 s&h.

Comanche Song Book. Collection of 116 songs written in Comanche with an English translation, plus a set of 3 CDs of the songs. \$20 plus \$5 s&h.

Comanche Flash Cards Set. Three sets of 48 Flash Cards using simple Comanche words, accompanied by a CD. \$12 plus \$3 s&h for all three sets.

Comanche Language Tee-Shirts. Comanche language logo in full color on left chest. Available in solid red or royal blue. Children's sizes small (6-8), medium (10-12), and large (12-14), \$10; Adult sizes small through XL \$12; Adult sizes 2X and 3X \$15. Specify color and size when ordering and add \$5 per shirt s&h.

Authentic Handmade Comanche Dolls. Beautiful 20" soft bodied dolls, dressed in traditional clothing. Both girl and boy dolls available. \$40 each plus \$5 s&h. (Special Order: Allow 6-8 weeks delivery.)

Tote Bags. Navy with red trim. 16"x12"x5" with back pocket. Front has the Comanche Language logo. \$12 plus \$5 s&h.

Ball Caps. Royal blue with red bill and Language Logo on front. \$10 plus \$5 s&h.

Lapel Pins. 1 inch round Cloisonne pin with colorful C.L.C.P.C. logo and "Numu Tekwapu" in center. \$5 includes s&h.

New Lapel Pin. 1 1/8" Silk screened lapel pin with clear epoxy finish. Exact replica of our colorful CLCPC logo complete with feathers, on gold plating. \$5 includes s&h.

***Please Note:** We give discounts to enrolled Comanche Tribal Members. Contact us before ordering (see top of newsletter).